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ABSTRACT

Year-round education is an idea that has been successfully implemented in many schools located in the western United States. This paper presents findings of a study that explored public opinion toward year-round education in a portion of the midwestern states. A total of 30 individuals living in northwestern Ohio and southeastern Michigan completed an opinion survey on year-round education. The sample selection was based on participants' expressed interest in the topic of year-round schools. Sixty percent opposed year-round schooling, 27 percent favored it, and 13 percent were undecided. Those opposed expressed concern with changing the traditional summer vacation and felt that year-round education did not necessarily improve the quality of education. Most individuals were unaware of year-round schooling's benefits, such as decreased dropout rates, less teacher and student burnout, and students' increased retention of material. In summary, the majority of respondents felt that year-round education was an unnecessary change. The appendix contains a copy of the survey. (LMI)

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Opinions Regarding Year Round Education:
A Survey Among the Public

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Abstract

Year round education is an idea that has been successfully implemented in many schools located in the Western portion of the United States. To ascertain the public opinion of year round education in the Midwestern portion of the United States, a survey was conducted asking for the opinion of 30 individuals. Findings showed that 60 percent were against year round school, 27 percent were for year round school, and 13 percent were undecided. Although there are many advantages to implementing year round education, the majority of the opinion in this area is that it is an unnecessary change that would not necessarily improve the quality of education.

Opinions Regarding Year Round Education: A Survey Among the Public

The purpose of this study was to compare opinions of individuals as to the benefits and drawbacks of a year round school system. While the research that has been done on this topic provides both sides of the situation, it is obvious that proponents of year round school feel inclined to provide more reasons for the implementation of this plan (Ballinger, 1993; Oxnard, 1992; White, 1993). It is hypothesized here that more individuals will express a desire for the implementation of year round school, once the explanation that is included in the survey about year round schools is read and understood. This study will investigate the opinions of individuals and determine the need for further research in this area.

Studies of year round schools have proven them to be cost effective if approached in the proper manner (Denton & Walents, 1993). The multiple-track plan, as opposed to the single-track plan, can provide benefits in terms of cutting down on operating and capital costs. The potential exists for reduction of educational costs, especially in areas where population growth is a concern.

Further benefits of year round schooling include decreased drop-out rates, all-year counseling, the availability of cooperative work experience, and improved staff development

(White, 1993). Teachers, students, and administrators who have had the opportunity to take part in year round school have expressed an overall satisfaction and further stated that boredom and fatigue were reduced with the shorter, more frequent vacations of the multi-track system (Barrett and others, 1992).

Both advantages and disadvantages of year round schools are outlined in the study by Glass (1992). The advantages cited include cost-cutting, in terms of administrative costs, and less burnout among teachers and students. Disadvantages include the possible disruption of family life and the possibility that district services, such as special educaton and teacher workshops, may be difficult to schedule.

The study done by Rasberry (1992), defines the specific disadvantages of a year round school. There are no guarantees that additional time will be spent on a better education and furthermore, tax support for the program may be non-existent.

The present study is a step toward increasing understanding among those who are uncertain as to the public opinion on year round school. Although studies that researched the benefits and drawbacks of year round school were plentiful, a public opinion survey was not as readily available. Thus, the specific purpose of this study was to

obtain opinions within the framework of the general public concerning the implementation of year round school.

Method

Subjects

Thirty individuals living in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan were included in the sample. These individuals ranged in age from 24 to 58 and consisted of both men and women. They were chosen to participate if they expressed an interest in the topic of year round school. This random sampling approach was utilized due to its convenient nature.

Measures

A survey was utilized to determine the general opinion of the individual participating in the study (see Appendix). A brief explanation concerning what a year round school consists of was included in the survey, as well as a space for comments. The participant could circle "For," "Against," or "Undecided" when asked to respond to opinion regarding year round school.

Instruments

The survey utilized for the purpose of this study was formulated by the author. Questions were kept simple and easy to understand, since a general opinion was all that was required. Individuals who participated in the study were given an example of a year round school calendar and were then asked to complete the survey.

Reliability and Validity

The survey is considered to be reasonably reliable since the items included in the survey were minimal and easily understood. Errors and inconsistency could occur if the subjects were not totally honest about their opinion and were answering to go along with the status quo.

Validity information was not available for this survey.

Procedures

The survey was given to subjects who were first asked if they would participate in a survey for educational research. The survey and purpose of the survey were then explained to the individual with an emphasis being placed on honesty in answering the questions.

Subjects were chosen randomly over the period of one week and an emphasis was placed on choosing subjects of varying backgrounds.

Results

The degree and propensity with which subjects responded to the survey was astounding. While some individuals were undecided or simply uninformed about year round schools, most had a definite opinion and were quite willing to provide comments. Sixty percent of the subjects were "Against" the implementation of year round schools, 27 percent were "For" year round schools, and 13 percent were "Undecided." One

individual made a valid point when she stated that "if the schools were all air-conditioned" she would be for it. Others that were for year round schools believed that year round school would benefit the students in terms of an uninterrupted learning process. The time away from school would be less, thus increasing knowledge retention.

The individuals who were against year round school expressed a concern with the traditional "summer vacation." One individual commented that summers are for vacation - not school. Numerous individuals also made comments to the effect that quality of education was not likely to improve simply because of a change in the days that students are required to attend.

Individuals who remained undecided seemed to understand the benefits and drawbacks of year round school and, having never experienced a similar situation, were unsure of the long-term effects year round school would have on students.

The above results fail to support the hypotheses that the majority of the subjects would respond favorably to the idea of year round school. While there are many variables to consider when changing to a year round school, the survey failed to relate the importance of considering the benefits as well as the drawbacks when answering the questions.

Discussion

The results of this study clearly indicate resistance to the implementation of year round school in the Midwestern portion of the United States. While there may be some validity to the reasoning behind the resistance, it is believed that misinformation and resistance to change are the major influencing factors. Over 2,000 schools now use year round education quite successfully, proving that the system can work (Ballinger, 1993). Ballinger (1993), suggests introducing the concept to the public by stressing the educational values inherent in the year round school concept and avoiding large community meetings in the beginning stages.

The fact that 60 percent of the individuals who were surveyed were against year round schools indicates a powerful stance among the public. The results that were obtained in a study by Barrett and others (1992), indicate a public that is quite satisfied with the year round education system. The individuals who are currently participating in year round education accepted the system as an alternative to overcrowding in schools and a lack of teachers. Parents and staff believed that year round school allowed students to stay on task and retain more information. Furthermore, 90 percent of the staff were satisfied overall with year round education.

Perhaps if the same situation were to occur in the Midwest, and year round education was the only alternative, the public would be more willing to accept year round school.

In support of the individuals who were against year round education, Rasberry (1992), researched drawbacks of the system. Results of this study included an increase in dropout rates, diminished student employment opportunities, and less growth and development time for children. Furthermore, it was stated that extra time may not necessarily be used for better education. This statement supports the concerns of individuals that were included in this study.

Implications

The results of this study indicate that the public has definite views in terms of year round education. Very few individuals were undecided (13%), while the remaining individuals were adament about their opinions. Individuals undertaking research in this area should be aware of the fact that this subject may elicit strong opinions - whether they are for or against the implementation of year round education.

Summary

It should be taken into consideration that year round education is still a relatively new concept in the Midwestern portion of the United States. Many individuals are unaware of the benefits year round education can provide. Advantages

such as decreased drop-out rates and less burnout among teachers and students are important factors to consider. Furthermore, there is a distinct possibility that students will retain more knowledge, since the break between classes is less than three months. All of these factors point to how advantageous year round education can be. However, without the support of parents and the community, year round school may not get a chance to be implemented in this area.

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Appendix

Survey of Opinions Regarding Year-Round Education

The following is a survey that is being conducted for educational research. Your answers are confidential. Please be as truthful as possible when answering. Thank you for your help.

What is your gender? male female

What is your age? _____

Introduction

In year round schools, as in traditional nine-month schools, students attend classes about 180 days of the year. In the most popular year round plan, four groups of students attend school for nine weeks, and then have fifteen days off.

What is your opinion regarding year round school? (Please circle the appropriate response.)

FOR AGAINST UNDECIDED

Comments: